

The Norwegian-American Historical Association

Northfield, Minnesota

NEWS



LETTER

From the NAHA Office to the Association Members

NUMBER 122

EDITOR, KIM HOLLAND

FALL 2004

LATE INTRODUCTION TO UNSUNG HERO

Evelyn Hammaren, a NAHA member from New York, was on a cruise to South America recently. Over the course of several dinners and conversations, Evelyn learned that her new 83 year old friend, Jesse Shapiro, also from New York, had served in WWII as part of the well known 10th Mountain Division. In fact he was still a skier and made it to the slopes each winter. Jesse Shapiro told her about his efforts to keep the veterans together and to keep in touch with the family of one of his skiing colleagues who had been killed in battle. As the small world would have it, Evelyn knew the family of Torger Tokle in Lake Telemark, New Jersey.

Shapiro contributed copies of clippings from "The New York Times" and various other newspapers and skiing magazines about the exploits of ski champion Torger Tokle and his contributions to the United States war effort. Because of this chance meeting on a ship off the coast of South America, NAHA gained fresh information about a Norwegian-American hero.

Torger Tokle graduated from high school in Lokken Verk, Norway and arrived in the United States in 1939 not speaking a word of English. He got off the "Bergensfjord" on a Saturday and spent his second day in America ski jumping at Bear Mountain, New York, where he won his class. In 1940 Torger was eligible for Class A competition and won 42 out of 48 meets, set 24 records, and increased the length of his jumps.

Tokle supported himself between meets as a carpenter in Brooklyn. Soon he was approached to become a ski instructor, but decided to keep his amateur standing. In January 1942 he volunteered for service in the Army but was rejected because of a defect in his teeth. Using his own money, Tokle had his dental flaw corrected. In March 1942 Tokle set a record for the Western Hemisphere ski jump in Pine Mountain, Michigan. Shortly after setting the record, Tokle was inducted into the Army and assigned to the 10th Mountain Division where he trained at Camp Hale in Leadville, Colorado. Tokle led his platoon during a drive north through some of the most rugged terrain of the Apennines in Italy and

was killed by German shell fire short of his 26th birthday. When he joined the 10th Mountain Division he told friends, "I will do everything for my adopted land to help it remain the champion of the small and downtrodden nations in Europe." Tokle was honored by posthumous election to the National Ski Hall of Fame in 1959.

Thanks to this chance meeting between a NAHA member and a colleague of Torger Tokle, we can share these articles and a copy of his petition for naturalization. Be alert to the possibilities of similar treasures for the archives, for future researchers and story tellers to use in telling the "big picture" of Norwegian contributions to American life.

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBER - DAVID HILL

Through this newsletter we introduced you to O.J. Tomson who challenged and inspired us in 2003 to think about NAHA and our commitment to this Association in a whole new way. O.J. continues his personal commitment to NAHA by scouting for new Board members when he is conducting business!

We are pleased to have David Hill from Ellsworth, Iowa, on the NAHA Board of Directors. David is immensely proud that his roots are deep in the heart of Iowa farm country. If you know much about the Norwegian settlements in the upper mid-west, you know the towns of Jewell, Story City, and Roland, Iowa, were significant communities for Norwegians who saw the agricultural potential in the good flat land and rich soil. David's ancestors emigrated from small farms on the edges of Norwegian fjords. He is a descendent of the "Sloopers", the first Norwegians to arrive as a group in 1825.

David graduated from St. Olaf College in 1964 and has been in banking and real estate development ever since. David, and his wife Cindy, call Ellsworth, Iowa home but he spends significant time in West Des Moines where he and his two daughters, proud fourth generation St. Olaf graduates, are working together to manage Freedom Financial Bank.

Hill mentioned his respect for the courage of his ancestors in the way they faced uncertainty and hardships in leaving Norway and in carving out a new life with the grace of God and the fertile soil as one of his reasons for joining the NAHA Board. Their establishing of successful farms, churches and communities is the foundation of the opportunities and success he has enjoyed. We are grateful David's curiosity about those contributions has led him to join with NAHA in celebrating those early hardships and preserving the stories of all Norwegians who chose to start a new life here in America.

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

The NAHA Staff and Board wish to thank the members and friends who have supported the work of the Association throughout the year. Maintaining the archives and NAHA's specialized publications are important components of preserving the stories, documents and experiences of the many Norwegians who chose to make the United States their new home. We look forward to continuing this significant work into the future with your help. Listed are your contributions from January through August 2004.

\$5000+

Turi Josefsen • *Mary Ann Olsen**

\$1000-4999

Tore Detlie • Lloyd Svendsbye* • *O Jay Tomson**

\$501-999

Nancy Gossell*[†] • *Lois Rand*[†]* • *Solveig Zempel**

\$251-500

Karen F. Davidson • Rev. and Diane Richard Halom • Katherine Hanson • Kimberly Holland* • Dave Holt • Iver Hustvedt* • Adrienne Morrison

\$101-250

Harold Bakke *[†] • *Joan Naglestad Buckley** • *Ruth Hanold Crane** • Lois Drews • Consul Norval Engelsen • Dr. Frederic A Giere* • Atle Gjelsvik • Orrin Helstad • Clayton L. Johnson • Joann Kleber*[†] • Doris Kornfeld • LaMirth Geving Peterson • *Nils Lang-Ree** • Deborah Miller* • Nortana* • Brynhild C. Rowberg* • *Brian D. Rude**

\$51-100

Marian Aaker • George Aker* • Forrest Brown* • Camilla Cai • Ruth E. Christ • Conrad J. Christianson Jr. • Douglas Crane* • Donald L. Dyresen • Norman Erickson* • Rakel L. Erickson • Robert Flaten* • Luther O. Forde*[†] • Janet Geronime • Robert Granrud • Eric Hallen • Bonnie Harwick • Lawrence O. Hauge* • Donald Hesse* • Torild Homstad* • Mary Hove* • Stan Hultgren • Pearl Husby • Marilyn M Jones • Lois Jordahl • Philip Larson • Ronald Lien • Lew Linde • Fritz Lokensgard • Ronald Lovehaug • Sylvia Meagher • Hon. Walter F. Mondale • Paul Monson • Doreen Ness • Mrs. Ardis Nier • Eugene J. Nordby • Lowell E. Olberg • Duane & Joan Olson* • Jim & Jan Pence[†] • Albert Quie* • Barbara Renton • Charles O. Richardson • Johan Ronningen* • Philip Smaby • Beverly Smith • Thomas Sorenson • Dr. Allan Sortland • Carole Stempfily • Carl R. Sunde • Robert C. Tengdin • Arnold W. Thompson • Tom Tombarge* • Frank A. Tysver • Paul T. Vangerud

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Special Donations

Sarah Buck-In honor of Lois Rand's Birthday
Karen Nelson-In memory of Lawrence Nelson
Lois Rand - In memory of Gerda Fiske & Alton Amdahl
Johan Ronningen- In memory of Frithjof Roe & Harald Roe
Erlaine Seeger - In memory of Carl Roeberg
Tom Tombarge - In memory of the Norwegian Immigrants

[†]Includes gift in memory of Dr. Sidney Rand

*Includes gift in memory of Dr. Lloyd Hustvedt

NAHA Board Members

2004 NAHA PUBLICATION

The book has been written, edited and is now at the printers! We are proud to announce your 2004 book, *Leadership in Midwestern Politics: Scandinavian Americans and the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 1890-1914*, is in the process of being bound. We expect to have the books in the mail before Thanksgiving. Please notify our office via email (naha@stolaf.edu) or by phone (507) 646-3221 if you have a recent address change.

THANKS TO A GOOD SAMARITAN!!

The next time you visit the NAHA archives we can provide you with more comfortable seating and back support as you do your research. Jon Bergquist from Safco Products has donated ergonomically correct chairs for your comfort and use. The chairs are overstock and need a good home! Our thanks to Lee and David Rokke for letting Jon know about our needs and to Jon and David for even assembling the chairs!

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM S/N FAERDER LODGE #109

Words of encouragement come from unexpected places! NAHA received a check from the Brooklyn, New York Sons of Norway Lodge, Faerder #109, for \$200 to support the work of NAHA. They noted that due to the current "robust" economic times in Norway fewer and fewer Norwegians actually settle in the United States. The Faerder Lodge #109 wanted us to know they felt it was

important that we all continue to support our Norwegian heritage. Our thanks to their officers Else, Sonja and Sylvia!

ADDITIONS TO THE ARCHIVES

Received from Audrey Erber, *Brita Edwinson, Elling Thompson, and Endre Anderson Family History Vol. 1*. Hard cover, 239 pages. The author provides background to the emigration of three families from Norway, who are linked by marriage after they settled in the United States. They settled first in Wisconsin, moved to Iowa and then to the Dakotas. Includes copies of maps, records, deeds, census records, charts and photographs.

Received from Joan Axdal, Vivian Sardeson, Jean Ekern, *Hoverud Connections: Immigrant Ancestors from Valdres and Hallingdal, Norway and their Descendants, 155 Years in America*. Hard-cover, 668 pages. Includes maps, photos of ancestors and current family members, family charts, addresses of family members and important churches, schools and portions of the NAHA book, *Frontier Mother* by Gro Svendsen.

Received from John Holland Redfern, interviews, newspaper clippings and photos of Peter and Iver Lukken who left Gudbrandsdalen, Norway to settle in Canton, South Dakota.

Received from Alvin Steberg, *The Ghost Towns and Discontinued Post Offices* of Goodhue County, Soft-cover, 131 pages. The author, Roy Meyers, grew up in Goodhue County and maintained a life long passion for the "forgotten hamlets" of his home county. Includes photos of churches, schools, general stores, hotels as well as a brief history of the little communities in this important county, which included large Norwegian settlements.

Received from Evelyn Hammaren and Jesse Shapiro, articles about Torger D. Tokle who was a champion ski jumper and who was killed in action in Italy during WWII as part of the 10th Mountain Division.

Received from Brynhild Rowberg, a booklet, *Your Family Name - What Does It Stand For? Is It Worth Preserving?*, Soft-cover, 30 pages. Author was A.A. Rowberg, who was the founder of the now 200,000 item "Rowberg Files" used by scholars and family historians here at NAHA. Rowberg stresses the importance of knowing your history and of gathering information while it is fresh.

Received from Robert and Lois Jorstad, *The Jørstads of Ombo 1550 to 2004, History of the Jorstad Family that Emigrated from Ombo, Norway, Their Lives and Times and Related Families*. Soft Cover, 520 pages. Includes a history of Ombo, the early generation of Jørstads, the

family who remained in Norway, photos from long ago as well as recent family members, maps, and a thorough bibliography.

Received from Gretchen Quie, *Family Histories, Quie/Jacobson/Hansen*. 3-ring binder, approximately 200 pages. A narrative on the life of a Norwegian-American congressman and governor and his family as well as the Norwegian ancestors of Gretchen Hansen Quie. The Quie name was spelled Kvi in Norway and the family came from Flå, Hallingdal. Includes photos of the family members, their houses, copies of newspaper clippings, baptism records, and genealogical charts.

Received from Dale Hovland, *The Wilson Line*. Soft-cover, 128 pages. This book tells the history of the Wilson shipping line which started importing iron from Sweden to England. Due to subsidies from the Norwegian and Swedish governments for carrying mail, the line expanded to include emigrants. Large numbers of Norwegians and Swedes came to Hull, England to start their journey to North America. Includes photos of different ships and their interiors as well as the offices of the emigrants and offices where tickets were processed.

Received from Lee Rokke, *Emigrants From Toten Through Ellis Island*, by Garth Ulrich. Soft Cover, 32 pages. The author has put together a finding aid for locating people who listed Toten or Thoten. The names are listed both chronologically and alphabetically, and include first name, patronymic, farm, year and age when coming through Ellis Island.

Received from Lee Rokke, *Kommuner av Norge*, by Garth Ulrich. Soft-cover, approximately 30 pages. The author has created a guide for finding the kommuner within each Norwegian fylke. This can be helpful when trying to find out exactly where your relatives might have originated. Includes tips on farm names, parishes versus sub-parishes, and alternate resources for searching for this type of information.

Received from Audrey Mortensen, *My Dear Jacob, A Collection of Letters from 1889 On*. Spiral bound, approximately 380 pages. 160 letters, spanning 44 years. We learn about a grandmother the granddaughter never had the chance to meet except through the long saved letters. The grandmother, Lena, grew up in a typical Norwegian American household in Minnehaha County, South Dakota, the third of eleven children. Her parents came from Norway and started a new life on the prairies of South Dakota. Education was important and in 1893 was not quite so common. The correspondence begins in 1890 and concludes in 1933. Some letters were in Norwegian and later correspondence was in English. Includes an epilogue with more current correspondence and photos from the large family.

Received from D.W. St. John, *Poles Apart, The Admiral Richard E. Byrd and Colonel Bernt Balchen*

Odyssey, by Bess Balchen. Soft-cover, 165 pages. The book tells the story of two prominent men in the field of polar exploration who had been close colleagues at one time and then went their separate ways. The story behind their opposing views and jealousy is told through Balchen's letters, excerpts from newspapers and books as well as recollections told to his wife at the time. There is speculation Balchen knew a secret about Byrd and his 1926 claim to have reached the North Pole.

Received from Lee Rokke, *Tuntlandsvikane*. Hard-cover 154 pages, family history of the Galtung Family, the history of Suldal and Hjelmeland in Norway and the families of Borghild Larssdatter Stensland, Niels Larsen Hjelmelandsvaag and Holger Larsen Tuntlandsvikane. Includes copies of some baptism certificates, naturalization papers, and newspaper articles.

Received from Lee Rokke, *Footsteps Thru Time*. Hard-cover, approximately 190 pages. Includes family trees, photos, some maps, and remembrances from Johannes Aagesen Bergesen and Josefine Nielsdatter Korslien. The family farm in the United States was in Le Roy, Minnesota. Where the information is available the author also includes relatives still living in Norway.

Received from Jean Olsen, *A Norwegian Seaman Becomes an American GI in World War II*. Loose-leaf, 28 pages. This is the story of Mikael Granum who grew up in Norway during the Depression, becoming a seaman who traveled the world on cargo ships and for the Norwegian Navy before WWII broke out. He tells of learning English while visiting New York and also the hardships in Norway before occupation by the Germans. Eventually Granum visited relatives in Minneapolis and was drafted into the American Army. The GI Bill allowed Granum to pursue an education in the United States, where he became a printer for the Minneapolis school system for many years.

Received from David Laskin, *The Children's Blizzard*. Soft-cover, 295 pages. The author details the drastic winter weather which swept through Nebraska and the upper midwest on January 12, 1888. Children were sent home from school at a point when the wind shifted and the temperatures dropped 18 degrees in a few minutes. Weather forecasting and communication did not exist as we know it today. The 1888 blizzard became known as the school children's blizzard because so many of the victims were caught out on their way home. The number of deaths estimated from the blizzard is between 250 and 500. The prairie settlers whose children were lost were mainly Germans and Scandinavians who had arrived for the chance to own land, start fresh and hope for a better life.

Received from Ole P. Gamme, a complete set of Hadelandlag of America's newsletter "Brua" (in Norwegian) from 1921-1951. 3 spiral bound books.

Most of the issues came from the Peder Nelson collection, which were given to Gran Historical Society by Harriet Foss, Northwood, North Dakota.

Received from Robert Fliegel, *The Aalbu Sisters and the 620 Club*, an article from "Hennepin History" magazine, summer 2004. The four Aalbu sisters grew up in a Scandinavian neighborhood in Minneapolis, their father, Oscar, having emigrated from a farm near Oppdal, Norway. The Aalbu sisters took stage name of the "Albee Sisters" for their vaudeville act since that was easier to pronounce. They were talented and versatile musicians and dancers with careers that took them to New York and California, but Minneapolis remained home.

Received from Dr. Neil Eckstein, *Berner, en norsk slekt i 300 år*, Hard-cover, 300 pages. A family history including photos and an index of names.

Received from Dr. Neil Eckstein, "A Short History of the Larsen (Longum) Family 1750-1914." Loose-leaf, 11 pages. In 1914 Gunder Larsen wrote down his memories of family stories and connections later in his life. Gunder and his brother Lars served in the Civil War. Includes birthdates, some marriage dates and dates of death for family members up to 1914. Gunder did return to Norway in 1882 for a visit of three months, but lived the rest of his life in Wisconsin. Relatives of note include Congressman Kittel Halvorsen, United States Senator Henrik Shipstad, and Wisconsin State Legislator Johannes Anunsen.

Received from Dr. Betty Bergland, "Norwegian Immigrants, Wisconsin Tribes and the Bethany Indian Mission in Wittenberg, Wisconsin, 1883-1955." 36 page article originally presented at a NAHA-Norway conference in Bergen, 2003. The Bethany Indian Mission at Wittenberg was the formal outreach to Indians sponsored by the Norwegian Synod, serving several Wisconsin tribes for over 70 years. The article examines the beginnings and development of the Mission, the historical context and comparative perspectives on missions and government schools.

Received from Elaine Varland, *Glimpses of Selma Leckness Elliott, an Autobiography*. Soft-cover, 116 pages. The daughter of a Norwegian emigrant from Hjelmeland and a Norwegian American father, at age 84 Selma wrote down her memories about growing up in Norwegian-American towns, Garden City, Iowa and Hayfield, Minnesota, and her life's journey through important times of transition in America. Party phone lines, the 1918 influenza epidemic, World War I, tornadoes, the Depression, Normal School teachers training and significant events were part of her life in the early 20th century. Includes photos of the 1925 Hayfield tornado damage, family members, newspaper articles, obituaries, an index and some genealogical information about Selma's ancestors.

Received from Dr. Kristin Risley, *American Periodicals – A Journal of History, Criticism, & Bibliography*, Risley's article, "Christmas In Our Western Home: The Cultural Work Of A Norwegian-American Christmas Annual." Pages 50-83. The author concludes that the annual *Jul I Vesterheimen*, published by Augsburg Publishing House from 1911-1953 had a dual mission: to share with its readers the new cultural ideas taking place in America but to also remind them of their home, values and traditions of Norway. Advertising was both in Norwegian and English and the magazine mirrored the increasing Americanization of the Norwegian immigrants and the following generations.

Received from James T. Engh, *Slægten Reishus, Third Edition, A Collection of Information about the Descendants of Sondre and Ragnild*. Spiral bound, 202 pages. The recent discovery of two sisters of the great-grandfather Tobias Reishus led to additional branches added to the family tree. Includes background information about Norway and its various languages over the centuries, photographs, copies of church records, maps, letters and newspaper articles.

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